

UBD chapter 1

One aspect of this reading I found particularly interesting was the section on the whom, what, where, and how for teachers. An understanding of each of these elements is crucial to having an effective classroom. Having an understanding of the who (the students) gives you the opportunity to adjust a lesson for a number of students with different needs, going into a classroom without an understanding of who you are teaching the material to inhibits your ability to convey the material effectively. Understanding what your teaching should be go without explaining. Of course knowing what you are teaching is necessary to teach it, but the difference between having an adequate and a mastery understanding of your content can make a huge difference in the adaptability of your lesson plan. If you know your content beyond what you are required to know you can deviate from a lesson plan easily if you start to sense it doesn't resonate with your class, whereas just a baseline understanding doesn't allow for that kind of flexibility. Understanding where you are teaching is also crucial for teachers as the learning environment can make or break a student's experience in the classroom. If you do everything correctly but a student is exposed to a hostile classroom environment that could all be for nothing because they might not be able to focus in class or the student might not come to class altogether. Finally the how is crucial because the way in which you teach the material to the class and the strategies you use in the classroom are ultimately going to be the final barrier between you and the student and an effective use of strategies can make your classroom operate that much more effectively.

Chapter 2 UBD

In teaching it is important to balance an effective understanding of your content with an effective understanding of your students. The multiplicity of students learning needs may not be immediately addressed when formulating a curriculum no matter how many strategies are employed. For this reason it is important to be engaged and invested in your students learning rather than focusing entirely on planning, of course the deeper the understanding you have of your content the more likely you are to have a strategy to engage a struggling learner readily available. I firmly believe this balance is key to becoming an effective teacher. When I have encountered teachers who have one of these traits but lack the other it becomes increasingly evident. I have encountered teachers who have masterful understanding of their subject matter and are truly brilliant in that area but lack the ability to engage a classroom and that knowledge often falls on deaf ears. Conversely I have had teachers who have great relationships with their students but lacked any passion or interest for their subject matter and while the students were engaged and enjoying the classroom experience they often didn't learn anything. When you find a teacher who is passionate about his or her material and passionate about their students learning, the classroom dynamic is changed drastically. A sense of affirmation and autonomy in the student I believe is key to motivating some of the more unmotivated students. When students feel that a teacher is genuinely concerned for their learning their interest in their learning will rise with it.

UBD Chapter 3

Some of the main things I took away from this chapter were strategies to ensure that you convey the message you want to as a teacher. The chapter talks a lot about how there is far too much content being squeezed into classes that don't have enough time and there are certain things we can do to avoid missing important information. One of these strategies was to focus more on big concepts rather than details while it's not suggesting that you summarily skip over pertinent details that are crucial to an understanding of the content it may suggest that sometimes using multiple examples for the same concept or getting far too precise may be wasting time and actually end up doing your students a disservice. Another concept that intrigued me was that the book we work off in class can be viewed as a supplement to rather than the guiding text to the classrooms learning. While I've never been interested in following a textbook page for page I would imagine teachers would have more of a responsibility to the text whether they liked it or not, this obviously isn't to say they suggest you throw out the book but it certainly has less of an integral role than I would have thought. Finally I thought the most important concept was backwards planning which we've already addressed in class. Basically if we know what we want students to come away from the class understanding we can work back from there as opposed to starting from day one and hopefully building a lesson plan that ends precisely where we want it to.

UBD 4

One of the important takeaways I got from this chapter was the importance of understanding vs knowledge. While knowledge is always important and going to be crucial to an understanding and an intelligence in any content area, understanding proves to be a better indicator of a student's engagement and overall comprehension of the content. For example a student might know that the United States entered world war 2 in 1941 but it is far more valuable to understand why they entered the war and to make the connections of what events led up to that moment. If we can teach in a way that allows students to make connections rather than just memorize material then the learning of that material will be far more enduring and can be a foundation to build more connections from. For this reason concepts become more important than details, if students spend time memorizing details of the content such as names, dates, etc. then they run the risk of missing or glossing over the take home points of a lesson. Conversely if a student first has an understanding of the big picture or has a conceptual understanding of the lesson then details serve as evidence a student can attach to that concept as a validation of material they understand. One concept I didn't necessarily agree with was that the "more or less" approach doesn't work or shouldn't be employed in the classroom. I'm not sure of the exact way to reach every student in the class and get them all to the same point by the end of the year. I don't believe the answer is to allow the students who understand the material at mastery level to sit in class and become disengaged because they aren't challenged by the material and to allow the students who don't understand to fall behind because they can't keep up.

UBD chapter 5

This chapter again mainly focuses on assessment. It talks about the three types of assessment which are formative assessment, summative assessment, and diagnostic assessment. Each of these serve a different purpose in giving the teacher insight on the students. Overall we can use assessment for many different things, chiefly among them being to use assessment as a measuring stick to see how you can make the students reach your ultimate goals for the course. If you find out that your students may benefit from you employing a particular approach that may not have been the case for other classes you've taught then you can alter your lessons to better fit the needs of that classroom. Another way of using assessment that goes beyond planning is using it to determine students understanding or mastery of the material. You may see test after test coming back as with no errors but if you're not asking questions that assess understanding then you may be setting them up to fail in the future. Before moving on from any content it is wise to ensure that your students fully grasp the content rather than simply memorizing it. If students have been memorizing material and are doing well in class you may be inclined to think there are no issues of understanding in the classroom, but when assessment is altered for the final test and students do poorly it may be too late to address a lack of understanding in the classroom that you weren't even aware of.